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ABSTRACT

To advance towards a science of human behavior there must be well-defined constructs. This aspect of theory building tends to be neglected in the research conducted and services provided with respect to Afro-American and other people of color. Consequently, there has been so little relevant social science. In recent times large numbers of Afro-Americans have engaged in self-directed shifts in personal social behavior. These changes in role behavior have been indicative of the search for an authentic identity. This direction begins with the political choice which supports the psychological freedom of self-determination to define what has been, is and will be for Afro-Americans as a people. Until this approach is embedded in the attitudes and assumptions of scholars no other scientific evidence will exist to show this denunciation of traditional behavioral sets as a major personality change. Personality differentiation is important along specific anthropomorphic lines that accommodate patterns of growth which develop out of coping and defending. The anthropological boundary of personality development has significance in its stimulation and support of certain self-reliant life styles. Modal activity or role behavior becomes important as self-expressions of social adaptation which transforms perceptions into goal directed behavior. Personality studies of ethnics of color become more than impulse release and affection or the constant reach for refinements in deficity modeling. Instead, assumptions about behavior can be put more neatly in terms of variations structured by the para-culture and by the entire society. (Author/JM)

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BLACKNESS AS A PERSONALITY CONSTRUCT[1]

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To advance towards a science of human behavior there must be well-defined constructs. This aspect of theory building tends to be neglected in the research conducted and services provided with respect to Afro-American and other people of color. Consequently, there has been so little social science of value to us. Furthermore, much of the confusion about who we are, what we are, what types of social goals are desirable, or how social issues are related to specific programs can be traced to the void in descriptions of known growth referent behaviors. In those instances where studies are available the emphasis is almost entirely on social pathology or genetic deficiency. While one might say that this condition holds because the behavioral sciences are not positive in approach, that explanation is hardly defensible in terms of the cost to humanity.

A different choice of content and of subject matter for studies cannot take place until important distinctions are made between a concept and a construct. For our purposes, a concept is the generalized description of referent or shared behavior boundaries. It is broad enough to include diversity and variety in relationships. Constructs,

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on the other hand, denote both a tool function and a goal function. Both of these considerations on constructs should be characterized by an empirical value system which has operational specificity. Therefore, knowledge about a people should not be confused with knowledge of a people. The latter is a case of learning from within the group of people and sharing the conceptual framework of that group. The former is a case of learning from without and imposing an alien conceptual framework on the observed behavior. (Thomas, 1973)

In recent times large numbers of Afro-Americans have engaged in self-directed shifts in personal social behavior. These changes in role behavior have been indicative of the search for an authentic identity. That authority of self has been determined by those who are in possession of the power to define and to set limits on behavioral patterns and to relate such activities to the improvement of the Black nation for the benefit of Black people. This direction begins with the political choice which supports the psychological freedom of self-determination to define what we have been, what we are, and what we will be as a people. Until this approach is embedded in the attitudes and assumptions of our scholars no other scientific evidence will exist to show this denunciation of traditional behavioral sets as a major personality change.

Personality differentiation from this overview is important along specific anthropomorphic lines that accommodate patterns of growth which develop out of coping and defending. The anthropological boundary of personality development has significance in its stimulation and support

of certain self-reliant life styles. Modal activity or role behavior becomes important as self-expressions of social adaptation which transforms perceptions into goal directed behavior. In this regard personality studies on ethnics of color become more than impulse release and affection or the constant reach for refinements in deficit modeling. Instead, assumptions about behavior can be put more neatly in terms of variations structured by the para-culture and by the entire society.

Among Afro-Americans the search for identity has not permitted easy access to our authority as human beings. As a matter of fact, most Afro-Americans are in a social dilemma where, as humans, we are in search of a cogent sense of self in society which depicts us as less-than-human. This condition has evolved four modes of adaptation: conformity, marginality, hybridization, and rebellion.

> (These modes are similar to those of the sociologist, Robert Merton. However, Merton's notions about innovation, ritualism and retreatism are legitimate activities in each of our categories.)

From our adaptations companion roles known as negro; nigger; white, middle-class negro; and Black have evolved. Each role represents attempts made to define Afro-Americans. Once the Afro-American has chosen his major role, the individual self will be visible.

In the negro role, the Afro-American conforms to the expected behavior of Anglo conformity at the expense of self. Such behavior can cause much misery and frustration. The nigger role is a mixture of psychological rebellion and social over-dependence. This mixture or hybridization develops the self-harming pattern of defiance for the sake

of defiance, giving a point of departure around which one can act out old responses to domination and rebellion. Even when one is aware that the behavior is inappropriate, self-destructive, or futile, one tends not to stop the activities. In self-harming defiance, the individual makes the false connection between being defiant and being worthwhile and strong. So he stops being defiant about issues but defies for the sake of defying, thinking erroneously that it is a good thing. (Jameson and Klein, 1969)

The Afro-American in the white middle class negro role refuses to recognize defeat by imitating the life style of Anglo Americans.This role is characterized by the rejection of Anglo stereotypes of negroness. K. B. Clark (1965) described white middle class negroes as dedicating "their lives to the task of becomming walking refutations of negative racial stereotypes. Clark went on to coin the term 'deminstrelization' to cover this concept. Deminstrelization occurs when the individual goes out of his way to show that a set of behavioral expectations held for him are the very ones which do not apply to him. This attitude also leads to total rejection of ethnocentrism.

The function of roles in this light is the predictable and constant gratification which gives certainty to the individual. The sense of identity arises from these gratifications. When a person has a feeling of being continuous in time, a feeling of fulfilling a place in one's own community and feeling an intrinsic value of self-esteem, then, his search for identity has taken a positive step toward personality consolidation.

At the same time, one must appreciate the pressure promoted by a society which demands that one limits his behavior to certain prescribed functions. Underlying this principle fact are the many political choices and moral precautions which imprison a person in what one should be. Preventing actions to the contrary are the socializing influences which create fear so that one does not escape and elude his predetermined condition. In these circumstances, goal directed behavior is lost in terms of the sense of fulfillment of an ideal which would affect growth motivation. One's behavior seems to be determined by psychological alternatives which lack confidence in human relations, especially trust. An avoidance of reality appears to be the response to the frustration of knowing what one is not and those ways in which one is treated as less than human. The pattern of activity moves from one impulse to the next. From "good nigger" to "bad nigger" for example.

Other adaptations are less emotional in nature. The rational approach is especially characteristic of the white middle class negro. In a discussion of this group's rejection of their cultural heritage Essein-Udom (1962) has stated:

> "In their anxiety not to appear racist in their thinking they have repudiated all racially conscious movements and organizations..."

This strong rejection, usually very verbal, by the white middle class negro can also be explained by the cognitive dissonance theory. The Afro-American who chooses this role over the other three in the construct,

subdues the resulting dissonance by emphasizing the bad points in the other roles, in this case the characteristics Anglos give Afro-Americans. While repudiating identity with Afro-American culture, the white middle class negro is in turn not fully accepted by the Anglo group in which membership is sought. Yet, having accepted that particular value system, one is forced to compete with Anglos at the risk of personal conflict. The antagonism resulting from marginality and alienation develops out of the self-definition based on conception of counter-contrasts. One becomes the very opposite of what is expected or even encouraged as acceptable conduct. Such an individual is in conflict with himself, with his fellow Afro-Americans and with other ethnic groups. The person is neither what he wants to be nor what others say is or should be the predetermined personal-social role. Ironically, it is this group that the largest number of professionally trained and technically skilled Afro-Americans hold membership. It has been pointed out, however, by Frederick Douglass and many others, that these Afro-Americans represent the most fearsome potential revolutionary threat to the existing social structure of inequality. The paradoxical failure is the psychological inability of these alienated, marginals to be advocates of the Black movement. At the same time they tend to suffer from feelings of guilt because they have personally benefitted from an effort which does not have their support.

The only role which affirms a positive Afro-American identity is the Black one. The mood of the Black role is tinted with existentialism.

Bad faith in self for example is the organizing principle of the other roles. Sincerity, the opposite of bad faith, however, can be used to understand the Black role. Sincerity, as the principle factor in personality consolidation, is defined as "man be for himself what he must be." This need for an authentic sense of self has been stressed by many writers. An Afro-American in complete negritude, according to Fanon (1967) is in the state of "I am wholly what I am." Certain aspects of Camus' philosophy is apparent in the Black mood. For Camus (1955) life must be lived as a fight against death since "Revolt gives life its value." Endurance and socially productive aggression are among the basic tools for people in this role. Self-determined action within the limits of life is also stressed. In this regard, the writings of Frederick Douglass antedate Camus' notions about struggle. The commitment and the challenge are eloquently stated by Douglass who said:

> "If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to cantor freedom and yet depreciate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground... They want the ocean without the roar of its mighty waters."

Elsewhere I have pointed out that the Black role has assumed all of the socio-cultural patterns of non-conformists. As such Black people have become aggressively independent; and at the same time hostile in dealing with groups and institutional failings that would maintain us as a passively dependent and self-defeating people. (Thomas 1971) Freedom has also been stressed by observing that "Blackness is a matter of being decidedly free as far as appreciating the probability of one's

total being...personal and social freedom and blackness are inseparable." (Thomas, 1971).

Each role adaptation is a personality construct which obtains from the use of Afro-American as the concept which establishes the anthropological boundary of people related through blood lines, similar social experiences, and a common cultural heritage. From the interaction of these biological, social and cultural dispositions, various modes of behavior come into existence. The growth interfacing of bio-social-cultural dispositions are mediated by personal dynamics which produce and sustain particular actions as developmental processes. For this reason some Afro-Americans not only accept adaptational failure through social overdependence but enjoy the rewards of such disordered conformity.[3] In the non-Black roles, Afro-Americans never develop self-reliance (negroes) or, as a way of life give in to self-harming defiance (niggers); or assume a repressive pattern of behavior using fear over rage as the basis for emotional control (white middle class negro). With the latter the conflict is between needful white approval (which is really the desire for security through social overdependence) and pride in self-realization ("I made it on my own." No one gave me anything." With plenty of hard work anybody can make it in this country".) None of these role behaviors resolve the ambiguity which places those Afro-Americans in a defective social

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[3]A more extended description of this condition has been labelled "negromachy", and it is discussed in my book, Boys No More.

system where being worthwhile, self-reliant, autonomous, responsible and the like are granted only when it is politically expedient for those who control the power structure.

In psychological terms, the Black role is the refusal to retreat from the biosocial realities by searching for new meanings as expressed in Blackness. The first three roles of the Afro-American construct are based on a bioasocial model with some type of adaptive inferiority where identity is disfigured or confused. The Black role operates from a biosocial model which acknowledges differences where racial factors are not constraining influences but rather facilitating ones. This Afro-American personality consolidation is fortified by a support system which upholds and demands ethnocentric values rather than to suppress such standards of conduct.

The thrust toward self-esteem, environmental mastery and self-definition flows out of Blackness as a behavioral science paradigm with mental health implications. Psycho-social intervention or prevention of pathological mind sets is used to promote the enlargement of potential and to enhance the socialization process of Afro-Americans as a people who grow and develop. Behaviorally, Blackness becomes manifested through outlooks, feelings, and thoughts which guide actions to enable Afro-Americans to conquer those forces which make us captives of our own humanity. Thus, when in possession of self through a primary reliance on self, these Afro-Americans obtain self-determined control over those sociopolitical institutions or arrangements that would obstruct socially relevant goals.

When in the Black role Afro-Americans seem like a different breed of people. Goal directed behavior is fully attended to in terms of "will to humanness" in one's own ethnicity and by one's ethnocentrism. This perception changes disordered behavior patterns from manifest helplessness, hopelessness, powerlessness or underachievement to personal-social adequacy through cultural self-realization as a performance criteria. Blackness is the essential adaptive process that (1) facilitates environmental mastery; (2) promotes self-esteem; (3) allows for growth motivation; (4) combats the neurotic compromise of apathy and passive aggression; and (5) incorporates narcissism and ethnocentrism not only as positive motivating influences but as the organizing drive for completion as a human. Psychodynamically, this process of self-realization with its ethnocentric content means that each behavior modality is an important aspect in the fulfillment of an authentic self. With self-reliance, achievement, pride and pleasure are based upon realistic self-appraisals. Blackness is experienced as intrinsic self-validating, self-justifying value. The process is self-fulfilling. The content promotes self-improvement. These phenomena are dynamic in their handling of interpersonal relations as the expansion in self-confidence makes for dependable, trustworthy actions.

Becoming or the constantly evolving, forever unfolding character is a vital feature of Blackness because it nurtures a mind set which shapes and selects self-actualization as the core of full humanness.

(Thomas, 1974) In this alliance rituals and symbols peculiar to the Black value system are neccessary. These referent sources provide not only a consistent, reliable grasp of concern, but they also enhance the authentic sense of social reality. In short, the adaptational organization provides safe-guards against identity diffusion or dislocation from an upheaval due to inappropriate modeling. Self-assertiveness for the emotional security of Blackness, however, does not emerge until dependence has been confronted on the old patterns of self-defeating, inappropriate, self destructive, and self-contemptuous behavior. The corrective emotional experience demands an understanding of arrested personal-social development.

Blackness changes the Afro-American's view of himself in a positive, personal growth direction. There is also a change in the Black person's view of, and relations with people in other roles. The desirable after affects stimulate a repetition of the Black experience. The external criteria validating affirmation of Blackness center on the means and ends of the Nguzo Saba or the Black value system.

Many in the Black or rebel role use the hybrid or nigger mode of adaptation to deal with momentary feelings of rejection and failure or as a way to sustain a fleeting sense of inadequacy. This behavior grows out of the idealized "bad nigger" which represents an attempt to obtain emotional security through a pattern of defiance as psychological strength. It is also reflective of the need for adulation from all Afro-Americans or

as one brother said:

> "To show them who is the badest Motha f---a in these parts gives me the feeling I need to go on. You got to expect to fight Charlie. That's a way of life. But, you got niggers to deal with too." And can't get no help, no time , on nothing."

Frustrations over feelings of disgust appear to be a primary reason for getting into the nigger role for "relief" from the pressures. The difficulty with this type of adjustment pattern is that one can be destroyed by it. On the other hand, a denial of frustration is not to be encouraged. One has to master the dislocating agitations through a critical examination of what he is doing; with whom he is doing it; and, for what reasons he is doing it.

Any one who has lived with other people, worked or played with them has experienced some frustration. Unpredictable interpersonal relationships become disconnected. Most often the difficulty can be traced to an inability to control some out-group situation. Recurrences of the agitation can also be due to a failure to change the distorted views and treatment of in-group members. Blacks must always be aware of the need to maintain a decreased level of frustration with out-group people. Such behavioral in-put and out-put have to be a part of Black consciousness. The counter balancing for us is to expand the level of frustration tolerance for in-group members while decreasing it for out-group members. The latter is possible when there is a firm ideological base from which it is possible to engage in a repertoire of sustaining behavior.

The fight to gain control over the nigger and to sustain the existential death of the negro is endless. Without periodical evaluations of thoughts, feelings, actions and their compatability with Black values, relapses can occur which evoke acute anxiety, depression, withdrawal and even a sudden impulsive re-entry into a period of disordered negroness or sustained niggerish behavior.

For these reasons it is important to be alerted to the possibility of a turnabout to negroness and what may provoke such disconnected actions. Unfortunatly, no single condition or circumstance can be pointed out. There are almost as many specific variations for disordered behavior as there are people involved. Hence, there are numerous general events which interfere with the personal-social maintenance of Blackness. Among the more common situations are:

(1) The individual and his group setting unattainable or unreasonable goals, and too short a time span within which to achieve them.

(2) The group not giving the individual supportive recognition and credit for his efforts to initiate or maintain social change.

(3) The group's belief that the individual cannot become Black and has the choice of remaining negro or nigger.

(4) The piling-up effect of several small events or circumstances to recall and trigger a return to those things which were the vulnerable spots in the former identity.

(5) Previous personal-social contacts who assertively attempt to re-acquaint the individual with anti-Black values and life styles.

(6) Unresolved hostility expressed by the use of suppressed rage or passive aggression instead of by assertive expression of negative feelings.

(7) The use of Anglo-conformity as a weapon to gain acceptance, power and control of the group, instilling guilt in the group for not being able to bring about a profound change in the individual's value system.

(8) A continual use of unresolved negative relationships with respect to aggressive, dominant, authoritative, or hostile out-group people.

(9) A passive manifestation of Blackness as to be seen in collecting books and magazines or in attending "Black" movies or plays. The person talks and has the decor that would suggest he is quite Black. Upon close inspection one finds such individuals do not act in accordance with their verbal output and interior decoration.

(10) Using Anglo-conformity in work or school where the isolation and alienation from Black peers make for a social void which, when confined with felt hostility, has an erosive effect on the identity change.

(11) Being co-opted by what appears to be sensitive, supportive Anglo-Americans, where it is very common to find liberals or radicals engaging in activities designed to sabotage anything Black.

(12) An individual who consciously knows that he cannot make a permanent transition to Blackness but who cleverly disguises this information from the peer group. People of this type are very dangerous as they often involve the group in self-destructing actions.

These transitional problems are reflective of adaptive inferiority. They come about because Afro-Americans have been uncertain that we are in fact human beings. With such doubts Afro-Americans have periodically attempted to "prove" that we are human by subscribing to beliefs and values of other ethnic groups.

Stages in Becoming Black

Some fairly definitive behavior patterns have been identified which permit a description of the stages in becoming Black. This

information was derived from analysis of the general literature and conventional therapeutic models, and, through results from pilot studies and professional practice.

The entry level or stage one is characterized by confrontation. It was formerly designated as "Rappin' on whitey.' "Tell it like it is" is the current title of this stage. The confrontation is as much with self as it is with those external forces that have limited the development of an authentic self or facilitated a distorted significance of self. The creative use of conflict is a key element in this stage.

The psychological impact of confrontation can be dramatic. For Afro-Americans it creates the sense of being stronger than what was thought possible. This sense of power punctures the self-confidence of Anglo-Americans and underscores the fact that they are not as strong as they believed themselves to be. The outcome is a defensive reaction where many proclaim feelings of guilt. This emotional response appears to be supported through a loss of overt control by those thought to be child-like, inferior or less than human. As such the guilt is really suppressed rage which accounts for its release through counter-control measures of chaos, confusion or destruction. Paradoxically, it is almost always the liberal or radical Anglos who, in giving vent to their latent whiteness, become benevolent dictators. With bold openness, arrangements are made to control the behavior of those Afro-Americans who confront them.

A few Afro-Americans are often drawn into this counter-control behavior because they do not understand what is happening. In such instances, the social contingencies serve to destroy Afro-American culture rather than to sustain it. However, it is the use of confrontation as a tool which allows Afro-Americans to have a possession of self and to direct their behavior into the stream of Blackness. The interaction becomes the foundation for changing the view of the world in which one lives. Furthermore, the risk-taking aspects of confrontation become satisfying in and of themselves. These actions are quite important because they are critical factors in the maintenance of subsequent impressions, feelings, and ideas of social reality.

Stage two is known as "testifying". Catharsis in an emotionally supportive climate is the significant activity. This is the time of "spiritual purification" which provides a release from the hangups or problems about one's former life style and value system. Through the assistance of a group structure one verbalizes the apprehensions about becoming Black. Among the more common concerns are: What shall I do? How should I behave? What does it feel like to be Black? What is expected of me? Who is going to help me? How long will the change take? What do I say to family members and friends who do not believe that Blackness is very positive? And, do I have to hate white people? These issues reflect a concern for the need to assemble a self which would match the personality to societal opportunities that will promote growth motivation including physical characteristics that were previously considered bad.

Stage three is described as "I've got to know about me!" It is an information processing stage with emphasis on insight into the person and his heritage. The need to know Afro-American culture becomes a significant concern. Information processing is important for further growth motivation, cultural contributions as well as anti-social patterns must be examined. How well one masters this stage becomes the critical factor in the transformation of awareness and in making the transition to Blackness. It is at this point in the conversion process that denial, a sense of loss, and depression-like states take place. While negative in appearance or symptomatology, these personal indicators are hopeful signs for positive change. In a philosophical sense, these observed reactions are in response to the existential death which is necessary before a change in identity can take place. This existential death of the negro in Afro-Americans is a necessary development before one can be committed to Blackness. Among the more important concepts to be examined are ethnocentrism, denial of achievement, exploitation, conformity-proneness, narcissism, endurance, courage and personal-social security. Care has to be exercised so that the information presented is not too threatening. With respect to the latter, the most typical responses are, "That is not relevant" or "I just don't believe you!"

The fourth stage is entitled, "I've got to do it in order to be me." It is a time for testing out the new concepts of self. This is the action sequence where parterships formed through the matching of a

confirmed Black person with the emerging Black person. It is through this partnership arrangement that attention is given to seeing that projects assigned will design out dysfunctional features in the old life style or design in social stimuli which will enhance the new value system. Through this process also, sensitivity to the new growth motivation is the support system.

It is especially critical to see that the emerging Black person does not get into situations beyond his capabilities. Mixing-up priorities, messing-up programs, and trying to do too much in general can create serious personal-social problems. Hence, this action-testing stage must expose the individuals to a variety of shaping situations where choice-making may resist, transform, or nullify the new social stimuli. These opportunities for incentives and re-inforcements for growth motivation will prevent fixation and regression when the person is without monitoring support. This particular design is a safeguard against entering a situation on a superificial level of Blackness with a diminishing emotional investment or with a conflict between commitment and action. Without the correcting action the result leads to a regression where the former non-Black identity takes over. Key issues at this stage involve social competence, situational determinism, safe guards against permissiveness, and a productive use of conformity. If an identity change is meaningful it will be validated through communal action.

The final stage is labelled, "It's Nation Time!" Self-actualization is the hallmark of this stage. It is during this period that one makes

the critical decision to be Black and moves unhesitatingly to act upon the decision made. The validation of the action is to be seen through membership in a cultural nationalist group. Through the heightened self-confidence, self-respect and trust of self one is able to deal with others in an authentic human way. One is able to perceive himself and others realistically and behave accordingly.

As a process the stages have to be repeated in order to use the feedback in maintaining one's Blackness. As a personality construct, Blackness is a learned response of personal growth which demands courage, self-confidence, self-reliance, creativity, spontaneity and security. Its vitality and affirmation are dependent upon re-enforcement as is the case in any other behavior. Feelings central to the importance of self-worth are enhanced because the process becomes an important resource for fighting discrepancies between self and other segments of society. The power in the sense of self is crucial to community development.

Each stage in the process has a set of hurdles to overcome. The most outstanding problem, however, is the personal inability to make the required transformation into self-mastery.

We Ain't Ready

Resistance to the demands of Blackness can occur because of an unconscious desire to return to a former mode of adaptation. This unconscious longing appears to be quite characteristic of the marginal or white middle class negro. Such people tend to have had life styles

which make the decision to become Black a short lived event. It is also painfully difficult for these individuals to confront the fact that they obtain their knowledge of Blackness to avoid becoming Black.

If stage one (Tell It Like It Is) of the developmental process is managed, the resistant attitudes tend to become apparent during stage two (Testifying). The most common anti-Blackness expression is the inability to speak to the ways in which one has been treated as an object of social regulation or less than human generally. Of equal importance is the detachment from common interests on the Black value system. Some few individuals choose one particular personal or social value. People in either category have an idealized sensitivity to the issues of oppression due to race. They are prone to express unrealistic concepts of how different groups should relate to each other. It is because of the romanticized concept of interpersonal behaviors that these individuals have difficulty in establishing satisfying relationships with either Anglos or Afros.

The effort to make an emotional investment in Blackness and to launch a new life style is seen as greater than the personal resources available or as yielding few personal-social benefits. Additionally, they tend to be fearful of rejections or afraid that they will not be able to establish the easy, immediate acceptance and rapport that they had in support of their previous roles. Much of the latter difficulty seems traceable to criticism (real or imagined) that centers about possible rejection by good friends and relatives; and, the thought that further

rejection would be too high an emotional price to pay. Then, there are those actions which seem to state that one is destined to remain a captive of history as to be seen in the statements: "You will be a nigger no matter what happens"; or, "I am nothing but a nigger".

Many Afro-Americans are unable to perceive any chance of a solid, emotionally secure give-and-take exchange with Blacks. They tend to be more than a little afraid of what they regard as the ultimate performance in Blackness which is based upon the general assumption that paramilitary posturing is the only meaningful mannerism. For these individuals, confrontation is seen as creating greater personal-social problems by those who engage in it. Self-punitive activity not only becomes the expression of belief but it is used to support apathy, to steer clear of any significant risk-taking or to avoid dealing with any of the outcomes of excessive social dependency. The confusion in self-esteem or what has been labelled as negromachy (Thomas, 1971) is a reflection of adaptive failure. The individual who engages in dependency motivation does not believe that he or other Afro-Americans can satisfy our need to survive.

Group discussions of cultural heritage information makes one aware that one is not only a human being but capable and worthy of an authentic, ethnocentric identity. Too many Afro-Americans don't know that we had a viable culture which was deliberately destroyed. Too many Afro-Americans don't know that we have made significant contributions to civilization. Perhaps, the most important consideration to be understood is that out of the destruction of our original culture we have been compelled to develop a stronger more

viable culture. This sentiment is very well expressed by Claude McKay in his poem, Baptism, where he wrote, "I will return to your world--a stronger soul in a firmer frame". The same idea is found in the legendary saying "you can't kill niggers". The system of slavery and subsequent second class citizenship of being more slave than free or being treated as an infra-human, are the basis of such ideas. It is more psychologically accomodating to believe that we are happy in misery and ignorance or appraise our life styles as joyous, child-like, exotic, primitive than to be confronted with the challenges of being human. Nothing changes unless we change it.

Blackness brings lettered and unlettered together for a common cause. It gives all regional factions (northern and southern, easterners and westerners) shared assumptions about what's happening. It enables the development of trust because we know how to handle ourselves or what must be done to manage problems that are intolerable. Blackness, as Don L. Lee points out, is not the opposite of whiteness:

> "Yr/total consciousness is what blackness is after, a positive consistency (positive consistency: any/all movements in the right/righteous direction of exerting one's self, void of all contradiction).

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